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Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Environment and sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21

Letter dated 11 November 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

By order of my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the constitutive document for the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions that was launched during the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg, South Africa (see annex I). The enthusiasm and support for the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions so far has exceeded expectations, with 29 countries, 16 intergovernmental organizations and 13 organizations from major groups committed to the partnership. A complete list is attached for your reference (see annex II).

The Government of Switzerland, acting as the representative of the International Year of Mountains Focus Group, would appreciate it highly if the enclosed documents could be circulated as documents of the General Assembly, under agenda items 86 and 87 (a).

(*Signed*) Jenö C. A. **Staehelin**
Ambassador

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Annex I to the letter dated 11 November 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Johannesburg, 2 September 2002

International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions

An Outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

1. General goals

The importance of the world's mountain regions has been internationally recognized since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992; Agenda 21 contains a chapter specifically devoted to mountains. Mountains constitute 25% of the Earth's surface. Together with their peripheral areas, they provide a habitat for 26% of the world's population and are the source of fresh water for almost half of humankind. Mountains are characterized by a high degree of biological and cultural diversity. Although they have great economic potential in many parts of the world – e.g. in terms of water resources and tourism – most mountain regions are politically and economically marginalized and isolated and mountain populations are at a clear disadvantage by comparison with other regions. In concrete terms, sustainable management of mountain resources means enabling mountain populations to earn a livelihood, providing protection against natural hazards, enhancing conservation of natural resources, safeguarding social and cultural traditions, and supporting development that takes account of the special features of mountain regions and ensures that the interests of both mountain and lowland populations become equal parts of a fundamental social contract.

Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 contains two major program areas or objectives: (1) Generating and strengthening knowledge about the ecology and sustainable development of mountain ecosystems, and (2) Promoting integrated watershed development and alternative livelihood opportunities. Significant progress has been made during the past decade in addressing the first program area thanks to the efforts of governments, universities, NGOs, the Mountain Forum, the International Year of Mountains 2002 and thousands of development practitioners. The proposal that follows, which was prepared by a number of interested delegations and organizations during the Fourth session of the Preparatory Committee of WSSD in Bali, addresses the second, and perhaps more challenging, priority of actually improving livelihoods, conservation and stewardship throughout the world's mountain landscapes. The strategy proposed to help achieve this objective is to ***improve, strengthen and promote greater cooperation and partnerships*** between Major Groups, all mountain stakeholders, such as donors, implementing agencies, NGOs, private sector, mountain communities, academia and other field practitioners. The International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions will be guided by clearly agreed goals, its operations will be based on commitments made by partners and implementation will be supported through better linkages between institutions and improved monitoring systems.

Following the suggestion made by the Secretary General in his report on the implementation of Agenda 21, the implementation of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 therefore needs to be improved by reinforcing the international cooperation already under way since 1992, using the many positive experiences made during the International Year of Mountains 2002, by entering into more formal partnerships.

This would require countries, the international community and other relevant partners focus on the effective implementation of prioritized actions to manage mountain ecosystems through sustainable development, and to address chronic poverty in mountain regions through concrete programs and projects with sufficient support from all stakeholders. Regional, mountain-range specific and national partnerships and agendas should be the driving force in determining priority areas for action and the building blocks of partnerships at the international level. International Partnership for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions will provide an instrument to implement the proposed WSSD Plan of Implementation as agreed in paragraph 40 on Mountains:

"Mountain ecosystems support particular livelihoods and include significant watershed resources, biological diversity and unique flora and fauna. Many are particularly fragile and vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and need specific protections. Actions at all levels are required to:

(a) Develop and promote programs, policies and approaches that integrate environmental, economic and social components of sustainable mountain development and strengthen international cooperation for its positive impacts on poverty eradication programmes, especially in developing countries;

(b) Implement programs to address, where appropriate, deforestation, erosion, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, disruption of water flows and retreat of glaciers;

(c) Develop and implement, where appropriate, gender sensitive policies and programs, including public and private investments, that help eliminate inequities facing mountain communities;

(d) Implement programs to promote diversification and traditional mountain economies, sustainable livelihoods and small scale production systems, including specific training programmes and better access to national and international markets, and strengthen markets, communications and transport planning, taking into account the particular sensitivity of mountains;

(e) Promote full participation and involvement of mountain communities in decisions that affect them and integrate indigenous knowledge, heritage and values in all development initiatives;

(f) Mobilize national and international support for applied research and capacity building, provide financial and technical assistance for the effective implementation of sustainable development of mountain ecosystems in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and address the poverty among people leaving in mountains though concrete plans, projects and

programmes, with sufficient support from all stakeholders, taking into account the spirit of the International Year of the Mountain 2002."

The partnership will be elaborated further, starting at the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit and is conceived as an evolving and flexible instrument, open to additional themes, for example, sustainable energy production and use, preservation of cultural heritage and spiritual values, reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and adverse effects of climate change, land use planning and land management policies, landscape protection, generating, strengthening and disseminating knowledge, etc.

Given the transboundary character of mountainous regions, regional cooperation is an important instrument for implementing the goals of sustainable mountain development as been demonstrated by the Alpine Convention. Linkages with existing multilateral instruments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and other relevant instruments should be enchanced, taking as an example, the special focus on mountain ecosystems at the COP 7 of the CBD.

2. Relationship with Agenda 21 and negotiated outcome of WSSD

The proposed partnership is intended as a way to further implement Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 and the negotiated outcome document of WSSD, taking into account the growing involvement of global actors such as civil society, including private sector, NGOs and the academic and research community. The partnership represents a type two outcome of WSSD.

3. Possible partners

The international partnership is conceived as an umbrella alliance under which all partners could enter into specific sub-partnerships according to their interest, competence and willingness. Such sub-partnerships could be organized around thematic areas of action (e.g., biodiversity conservation, food security and poverty alleviation, etc.), geographic regions, or institutional concerns (e.g., mountain policy and law).

Building up on the experience of implementation of Chapter 13 and given the wide variety and diversity of issues and actors involved in the sustainable mountain development agenda, a delicate balance between flexibility and structure is required. This is an underlying concept that will determine the success of the partnership. The proposal therefore is to maximize the benefits of the experience of the existing networks and institutions to promote synergies and efficiencies and progressively engage other partners into collaborative action. Building effective partnership will also require associations with new partners who do not normally identify themselves with mountains or mountain issues.

Possible partners could be:

- States
- International Year of Mountains national committees[1]
- Local authorities
- International organizations/UN Agencies: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations University (UNU), World Bank, Global Environment Facility (GEF), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Tourism Organization (WTO), Andean Financial Corporation (CAF), Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and its centers and affiliates (International Potato Center (CIP), International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF)), etc.
- Regional organizations: the European Parliament "Friends of the Mountains" group, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Organization of American States (OAS), SICA, Regional Unit for Technical Assistance in Central America (RUTA), European Union (EU), South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), African Ministers Conference on Environment and Development (AMCED), Interstate Committee on Knowledge Promotion and Adult Education of CIS, Interstate Council for Sustainable Development of Central Asia, Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia, etc.
- NGO's: Mountain Forum, The Mountain Institute (TMI), Banff Center for Mountain Culture, World Conservation Union (IUCN), Conservation International (CI), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Association nationale des élus de la montagne (ANEM), Association Mondiale des Populations de la Montagne (AMPM), Euromontana, CONDESAN, African Mountains Association, Andean Mountains Association, Earth3000, Aga Khan Development Network, Helvetas, International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA), International Association "Znanie", etc.
- Private sector: World Economic Forum, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and its affiliates
- Universities and research institutes (Berne, Innsbruck, Vienna, Denver, Perth, Basel, Chambéry, Center for Resource Management in Colorado, etc.)
- Associations of farmers and other users of mountain natural resources
- other Major Groups

4. Principles for Action

Every partner contributes to the goals of the partnership according to its own priorities and is fully responsible for its own actions. The partnership would not coordinate the action of the members or assign specific tasks and responsibilities but would link existing activities and create synergies and complementarities to achieve greater coherence and benefits

[1] Approximately sixty-five countries have so far established or are in the process of establishing a national committee for the International Year of Mountains 2002. These entities could play a very positive role in the functioning of the partnership beyond 2002.

All actions under the present partnership should relate directly to Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 and to the relevant section of the WSSD negotiated outcome document.

Actions under the present partnership should be demand driven.

Actions under this partnership can be at local, national, sub-regional, regional and global levels.

Effective and collaborative implementation of sustainable mountain development should build on the existing and emerging partnerships and stakeholder dialogues and will need a common, easily accessible networking point. Existing networks, in particular the Mountain Forum, need to be supported in order to provide effective communication and related information services.

5. Commitments

Effective and comprehensive implementation of sustainable mountain development will require real and sustained commitment from all interested partners. Although many institutions, organizations and governments are currently involved in supporting sustainable development in mountain regions, a variety of new partners will be required to achieve more effective and widespread results. Preliminary identification and assessment of both currently active and potential partners is therefore needed in order to link existing activities and create synergies. Successful partnership arrangements will also require a long term commitment by those involved.

Each partner is invited to provide a brief description of intended contributions and actions toward implementing the goals described in Section 1 above, with respect to the following points:

- Thematic areas of action.
- Regional areas of action.
- Specific goals, objectives and expected outcomes of interventions
- Proposed partners
- Types of activities and scope, for example, capacity building, technical assistance, etc.
- Financial implications and modalities (e.g. on bilateral basis or through multilateral institutions)
- Timetables
- Monitoring arrangements
- Contact person: address/phone/email etc.

6. Monitoring arrangements

Due to the wide variety and diversity of issues and actors, no overall monitoring of the partnership is envisaged during its inception stage. However, it is essential that each

sub-partnership establish its own monitoring modalities. Monitoring arrangements should focus on specific actions and could include assessment of changes in mountain environments and the well-being of people (e.g. poverty levels). Full transparency should be a driving principle. All specific assessments should be made public. Peer reviews of progress and results could be organized and disseminated. Building capacity within regions and countries to carry out effective monitoring will be important, given the emphasis on regional, national and sub-national levels in setting agendas and implementing mountain development strategies and programs.

Eventually, an overall partnership monitoring mechanism should be developed which links to the general monitoring of the WSSD follow-up.

7. Policy reviews

Regular reviews (for example, at meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and other regional or international fora) will be required to take into account experiences made and to adapt strategies to changing situations. Electronic conferences could be used to exchange and disseminate experiences and lessons learned.

8. Implementation and coordination

The Inter-agency Group on Mountains has played an important role in promoting the Mountain Agenda. On a regular basis this group should be convened with all interested partners.

At the country level, coordination is the responsibility of the national government with the support of international organizations and in close cooperation with civil society groups.

At all levels appropriate and collaborative institutional mechanisms will need to be strengthened or established to ensure effective follow-up action.

In addition, at the global level a small task force may be required to ensure that the major thematic, geographic and institutional concerns of the mountain agenda are adequately covered as the partnership evolves and becomes increasingly operational.

Annex II

Commitments to the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions

(as of 16 October 2002)

Countries

Afghanistan, Andorra, Austria, Bhutan, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Monaco, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yugoslavia

Intergovernmental organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations University (UNU), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Potato Centre (CIP), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), African Ministers Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Centre for Development and Environment, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Major groups

Mountain Forum, Banff Centre for Mountain Culture, World Conservation Union (IUCN), World Mountain People Association, Unione Nazionale Comuní Comunitá Enti Montani (UNCEM), Euromontana, International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps (ISCAR), WWF-International, European Observatory of Mountain Forests (EOMF), World Economic Forum, Tebtebba Foundation, International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA)